

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CALLS ON MEN TO HELP STOP
RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—A survey conducted by Virginia Department of Health (VDH) indicated that one in four women and one in eight men in Virginia have been victims of sexual assault. Most of these assaults were perpetrated by males, and according to a 2003 U.S. Department of Justice survey, more than 70 percent of victims are assaulted by someone they know.

To help reduce rape and sexual assault in Virginia, VDH is sponsoring a targeted outreach campaign designed to raise awareness and to highlight the vital role young men can play in fostering healthy, safe relationships. Organized around the theme "My Strength is Not for Hurting, Men Can Stop Rape," the campaign emphasizes how men can be strong without using intimidation, force or violence. The campaign, funded by a grant for rape prevention and education from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, begins in early October.

"Rape and sexual assault in Virginia continues to be a major public health concern," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. "Historically, the issue of rape and sexual assault has been viewed as a women's issue. It is important to realize that this is an issue that impacts both men and women and we all need to work together to address it."

Ending rape and sexual assault begins by inviting men to learn about sexual violence, challenging them to examine masculinity and emphasize how men can be strong without using intimidation, force, or violence in relationships. Men have a responsibility and the power to end sexual violence.

"While most rapists are men, most men are not rapists," said Robert Franklin, VDH's male outreach coordinator for sexual violence prevention. "As men begin to speak out against rape and sexual assault they become part of the solution."

The My Strength is Not for Hurting campaign consists of:

- 30 outdoor billboards
- Movie theater slide advertisements in seven theaters
- 240,000 postcards placed in bars, restaurants, gyms and retail establishments in Richmond and Northern Virginia.
- Bus advertisements in Richmond and Hampton Roads
- A mobile billboard in Northern Virginia, Richmond and Virginia Beach
- Radio spots

For more information on this campaign and how men can be involved in the prevention of rape and sexual assault visit www.menendingviolence.com. You may also e-mail Robert Franklin at robert.franklin@vdh.virginia.gov, or call the VDH Center for Injury and Violence Prevention at (800) 732-8333.

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